

# **2024 Annual Report of the Congregation**



**St. John Lutheran Church  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
425 N. Main St.  
Russell KS 67665**

**Presented at the  
Annual Congregational Meeting  
January 26, 2025**

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# 1. 2025 Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda

2025 Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda  
St. John Lutheran Church  
January 26, 2025 ~ 11:30 am

- A. Invocation
- B. Call to Order
- C. Old Business
  - 1. Minutes from the 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting
- D. New Business
  - 1. Treasurer's Report
  - 2. 2025 Altar Guild Nominees – Congregational Approval
  - 3. Explanation of amended and updated Constitution of St. John Lutheran Church
  - 4. Explanation of amended and updated By-Laws of St. John Lutheran Church
  - 5. Introduction to 2025 Proposed Budget
- E. Explanation of the Ballot for Voting
  - 1. Action Items Requiring Congregational Vote
    - a. 2025 Nominees for Church Council
    - b. 2024 Philanthropic Fund
    - c. Russell County Area Community Foundation Beneficiaries
    - d. Endowment Policy
    - e. By-Laws of St. John Lutheran Church
    - f. Constitution of St. John Lutheran Church
    - g. Proposed 2025 Budget for St. John Lutheran Church
- F. Closing Remarks
- G. Prayer and Adjournment

## **2. Minutes from the 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting**

### **2024 Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes Sunday, January 28, 2024**

#### **Invocation / Call to Order**

- Vice President Kristine Mader called the meeting to order at 11:36 am following the 10:30 am worship service. Pastor Teri Sutherland led the congregation in prayer.
- Kristine Mader noted that there was a quorum present for the meeting. Copies of the annual report which included the financial report as well as reports from the various committees were distributed prior to the meeting for review by the congregation. The new budget proposal for 2024 was also distributed.

#### **Nominations and Elections**

- Kristine Mader thanked Blaine Maier for serving several years as Council President and Margaret Walter for serving on the Music and Worship committee for the past year. Both have declined to continue these positions at this time. The nominees for 2024 are as follows: Judy Holmes and Kelvie Reeves are up for reelection and have agreed to continue on the council. New nominees are Melinda Olson, Heather Pohlman and Afton Brown. A paper ballot was distributed to vote Yes or No for these nominees. Results were for “Yes” to accept all of the new nominees to the Church Council.
- The meeting continued with Altar Guild Nominations: The following names were presented - Connie Dumler, Melinda Olson, Crecia Reeves, Annette Stierlen, Sherri Stoppel, Katrina Woelk. A paper ballot was distributed for these nominees with an option for a Yes or No vote. Results were for “Yes” to accept these nominees to the Altar Guild.

#### **Reports**

- Written reports are included with the annual report.

#### **Old Business**

- No old business was presented.

#### **New Business**

- The Philanthropic Fund for 2024 is in the amount of \$1,571.36. Nominees were presented for a vote by the congregation. The two nominees presented are for Wiggle Your Wings Preschool so they may offer scholarships to those students who cannot afford to attend. The second nomination is to the Lutheran World Relief Fund. A paper ballot was distributed to the congregation to make their selection. After results were calculated it was voted to give 80% of the fund to Wiggle Your Wings Preschool and 20% of the fund to the Lutheran World Relief Fund.

- The 2024 budget was presented. Discussion was held with one concern that the Prayer Shawl Ministry line item showed a negative balance. This concern will be brought before the council for further investigation. With no other concerns present a motion was made, seconded and passed to accept the 2024 budget
- A date for the 2025 annual meeting will be determined at a later date.

### **Adjournment and Prayer**

- Kristine Mader noted that we would adjourn the meeting with the Lord's Prayer. The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 pm.

*Respectfully recorded and submitted by Carol Fritz, Church Council Secretary*

### 3. 2025 Church Council Members

St. John Lutheran Church Council Members, Officers, and Committee Assignments (as of January 1, 2025)

Pastor Teri Sutherlin .....Ex-Facto Member  
Lee Keffer .....Council President  
Gaylon Walter .....Council Vice President/Property Committee  
Kylie Stoppel.....Council Treasurer, Finance & Stewardship Committee  
Carol Fritz .....Council Secretary  
Afton Brown.....Education Committee  
Heather Pohlman .....Technology Committee  
Kelvie Reeves.....Youth Committee  
Melinda Olson.....Worship & Music Committee  
D.J. Klema.....Member  
\*\*Open .....Evangelism/Social Ministry/Parish Fellowship Committee  
John Dumler .....PMA, non-voting member

\*\*Judy Holmes will continue to serve as the Council elected church financial secretary but has resigned her position on the Council.

Eligible for re-election in 2025  
Gaylon Walter

Eligible for re-election in 2026

- Carol Fritz
- Lee Keffer
- D.J. Klema
- Kylie Stoppel

Eligible for re-election in 2027

- Afton Bron
- Heather Pohlman
- Melinda Olson

Nominations for 2025

- Gaylon Walter
- Alex R. Krug
- Hadlee Brown

#### 4. 2025 Altar Guild Members

Lois DeWald, Co-Directress \*  
Deb Karst, Co-Directress  
Rhonda Kuhlmann, Assistant Directress  
Gina Langhofer, Secretary/Treasurer \*

Connie Dumler	Teresa Hilbrink *	Alison Ryan
Danielle Ewers *	Barbara Krug	Crecia Reeves
Carol Fritz	Tiffinie Mai	Annette Stierlen
Corine Gideon *	Tammy Nuss	Sheri Stoppel
Denise Guth *	Melinda Olson	Katrina Woelk
Pam Gudenkauf	Janet Peerman	

\* Eligible for re-election in 2025

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#### 2025 Altar Guild Nominees

- Kris Boxberger
- Lois DeWald
- Danielle Ewers
- Corine Gideon
- Teresa Hilbrink
- Gina Langhofer
- Shayla Peck
- Brenda Yoder



## 5. Congregation President's Report

Dear St. John Members,

As we end 2024 I would like to say thank you for the honor and privilege to serve as your Council President. I wish to thank the other members of our council for their support and their dedication and additionally for the support of those members who have served or helped in any way through the various committees.

I am fortunate to serve with council members with varied levels of leadership experience and talents which has allowed us to accomplish a great deal this past year. I won't go into detail here as each of the members will be providing reports of their own. However, I would like to highlight some areas that pertain to the Congregational Meeting at the end of January.

As the elected governing body of the church, we have the responsibility to review church bylaws, policies and financial functions of the congregation. The hope and the purpose of these reviews are to develop business practices that protect the churches interest and provide for future financial stability.

The Council has approved proposed changes to the Bylaws as well as an Endowment Policy which was presented to you in various forms for you to view, ask questions and give input. These change proposals are a result of input from various individuals, committees, and an independent accountants' report. The proposed changes are yours to make by voting in our upcoming Annual Congregational Meeting. It is your choice, so please vote.

As we move into this coming year I encourage you to consider committing your time and talents to the continued growth of our church by any way you can or by filling positions of leadership. I also encourage and ask that you give your input on council matters in a constructive manner and call me if you have questions that pertain to the council. Please be involved.

I believe as many of you, that we are truly blessed with a wonderful pastor who through her efforts, exceptional skills, and resourcefulness has revived and expanded many of the ministries of our church. In this coming year, as the council president and speaking for the council, we hope to continue to support her in her efforts by sharing the leadership burden and allowing her more time on spiritual leadership, preaching and further expanding the ministries of our church.

In closing I would like to remind all of us that we have been called to serve the Lord in various capacities in which we are engaged. He has given us time, talent, and resources to carry out His mission and while we are tempted to take credit for our accomplishments, let us always remember that we are His instruments to carry out His ministries. Thank you all for your support during this past year. Let us all join together in His spirit to move to even greater achievements in the ensuing year.

God's Blessings,  
Lee Keffer, Council President

## 6. Congregation Treasurer's Report

As we reflect on 2024, we are pleased to report that our church remains in strong financial health, despite the challenges this year presented. Through the generosity of our members, both past and present, the church successfully undertook significant upgrades and repairs while adhering to the budget. Our investment accounts performed exceptionally well, achieving an average rate of return of 9.92%, which generated approximately \$260,000 in income across all accounts. These funds were largely re-invested to support the church in years to come. Additionally, the Mai and Earlin Nuss Scholarships distributed over \$10,000 in scholarship funds, providing vital support to students in our community.

To strengthen financial oversight, the Stewardship/Finance Committee was reinstated, and the church by-laws were updated to reflect modern financial best practices. We implemented new guidelines for offering counters to enhance security, and an external audit of our finances was conducted by Gudenkauf & Malone. Furthermore, we consolidated several bank accounts to streamline operations and ensure they align with our current ministries.

As part of the annual meeting, the council will present a newly developed endowment policy to the congregation for vote. Recognizing the need for clear and comprehensive guidelines in this area, the council has crafted this policy to ensure endowment funds are used thoughtfully and sustainably. The policy is designed to preserve these vital resources, enabling them to support our church's operations and ministries for generations to come.

Several notable upgrades and repairs were made to church property this year. These include the purchase of a new Canon multi-function copier/printer and, with the help of a generous anonymous donation, updates to our technology, marquee, and security system. Security enhancements included the installation of additional cameras (16 total) for safety and monitoring. Other facility improvements included replacing the sanctuary carpet, painting the bell tower, upgrading cemetery roads with chip seal, repairing the parsonage roof, and replacing the air conditioning condenser (twice!). To maintain accessibility during the winter, we also contracted snow removal services.

Despite these accomplishments, 2024 was not without its challenges. Church Mutual discontinued our insurance policy, requiring us to search for costly alternative coverage. Additionally, a \$25,000 wind and hail deductible was paid for repairs to the church and parsonage following storm damage.

Throughout the year, the council has worked diligently to better understand the church's financial position, ensuring that all resources are accounted for and used in alignment with God's will and our church mission. Transparency remains a top priority, and we invite continued open and productive dialogue about the church's finances.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to our

church bookkeeper, Shayla Peck. Shayla works tirelessly behind the scenes, ensuring our finances remain on track. Her dedication, expertise, and attention to detail play an essential role in maintaining the financial health of our church, and we are incredibly fortunate to have her.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are excited to present a budget forecasting a 3% reduction in spending, ensuring core ministries remain fully supported while achieving greater efficiency.

We look forward to another productive year, building on 2024's progress and continuing to invest in meaningful programs and sustainable growth for the glory of God.

Kylie Stoppel, Council Treasurer

## 7. Pastor's Report

On August 25, 2024, we celebrated my third year of ministry with this congregation, and I have been blessed by my relationships with you all.

As you read the included reports you will see how many things were accomplished this year. I am so grateful for the love and care this congregation, as a community of faith, has for their worship space and for each other. I am thankful for the willingness of members to actively participate in the life of the Church by giving their time, doing hard work, and planning the ministries of this Church. I greatly appreciate all the time and effort put in by members of the Council, those who serve on Church Committees and individuals who see something that needs to be done and are willing to step in and take care of it. This congregation is amazingly generous, and we have greatly benefited from some very substantial financial gifts and the willingness to donate so much time to the ministry of this church. I am also very grateful for all of our staff and their hard work.

The regular worship schedule at St. John is 156 worship services a year (3 services every weekend.) This year we continued utilizing the 5<sup>th</sup> *Sunday* weekends as opportunities to worship together as an entire congregation in *We Gather As One* services. Beginning in the fall of 2024, one Sunday a month was designated as a Children and Youth led worship service and two of these were single services at 10:30 AM on Sunday: September 29, 2024 (Youth Sunday), and Reformation/Confirmation Sunday October 27, 2024. We had three additional single service weekends: Sunday May 19, 2024 (Pentecost), Saturday June 29, 2024, at 6:00 PM and Sunday December 29, 2024, at 8:15 AM. 148 regular worship services were provided at St. John this year and I led worship 138 of these services. The weekend of March 9-10, 2024, Bishop Susan Candea visited our congregation and gave the sermon message at all three services. John Dumler, PMA led 10 worship services this year.

There were also 9 additional worship services: Ash Wednesday, five Wednesday Evening Lenten Devotional Services (2 were led by the 425 Youth Group), Maundy

Thursday Service, Good Friday Service, and Blue Christmas Service. St. John Lutheran Church also participated in Russell County Association of Churches “Praise in the Park” worship service on Sunday June 30, 2024, at 10:00 AM. During 2024, I prepared and provided 153 worship services.

I was out of the pulpit:

- Services on January 13 & 14, 2024, were cancelled due to weather.
- February 3, 2024, John Dumler, PMA led Saturday worship due to illness.
- February 4, 2024, John Dumler, PMA led worship for both Sunday services. I was Present so he could preside over communion, but did not participate due to illness.
- May 19, 2024, John Dumler, PMA led Sunday worship while I was on vacation.
- July 20, 2024, John Dumler, PMA led the Saturday worship service as there was a funeral that day.
- August 3, 2024, John Dumler, PMA led the Saturday worship as I was doing a wedding.
- August 31, 2024, John Dumler, PMA led the Saturday worship so I could spend time with my parents who were visiting.
- December 7 & 8, 2024 John Dumler, PMA led all worship services while I was recovering from surgery.
- December 21, 2024, John Dumler, PMA led Saturday worship, and I led the Blue Christmas Service that evening.

In 2024 I officiated ten baptisms, two confirmations, and two weddings. I officiated fourteen funerals this year, eleven services for members and three non-member services. We said goodbye to fifteen members this year. There was one service I was unable to officiate due to illness and am so grateful to Pastor Brenda Roger for her assistance and willingness to preside over this service for me. A First Communion Class for two participants was held on March 19, 2024, 4:30-7:00 PM, and during worship on Saturday, April 6, 2024, we celebrated with Emily Olson on her First Communion. On April 13, 2024, during Saturday worship we celebrated Sasha Robbin’s First Communion.

I lead weekly adult bible study on Thursday afternoons. We discussed how scripture speaks to us today and how we are called to respond to the world as Christians; and how it is often hard to let our faith guide us because of our emotional responses as human beings. During the Lenten season we read *Entering the Passion of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to Holy Week* by Amy-Jill Levine which included watching a weekly video presentation. We read and discussed the book *No Greater Jewel: Thinking about Baptism with Luther (Lutheran Voices)* by Kirsi I. Stjerna. We took another look at some of Paul’s letters in the New Testament and did a study on the book of James. We also studied the women in the Bible, including the deuterocanonical book of Judith in the apocrypha. I participated in the Women’s Group monthly bible study.

I continue to attend as many 425 Youth Group meetings as my schedule allows throughout the year and work to keep this time sacred so I can build relationships with our young people. I assisted with VBS this year, a partnership between St. John and

Trinity, and was held at Trinity Methodist Church. I am also being more present with our Sunday School children and assisting in closing Sunday School by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Sent monthly birthday and anniversary remembrances to members, and special occasion cards on Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas to all our care home and home bound members. Hospital, care home, and home visitation with members and provided communion. Was able to be with several families as their loved one's earthly journey came to an end.

At the Synod level, I completed the on-line training course "A Sacred Trust – Establishing and Maintaining Healthy Boundaries" on April 23, 2024; attended the Synod Assembly June 5-8, 2024; and the Fall Theological Conference October 14-17, 2024. I also completed two online pastoral training sessions on February 2, 2024, and September 17, 2024. and the Western Kansas Regional Gathering in Hays on October 23, 2023. I attended five Bi-Monthly First Call online meetings led by Bishop's Associate Rev. Dave Whetter, and on October 15, 2024, completed my three years of First Call supervision and training.

I am participating in an ELCA program called Resourceful Servants which required the completion of a Financial Assessment and developing an improvement plan. This assessment covered finances, accounting, human resources, risk management (including security and technology), and stewardship. This assessment highlighted the things we are doing well and the areas where improvements are needed. We have already addressed a number of recommendations that were generated through this assessment and will continue to work on making improvements.

My community involvement has included participation in the Russell County Association of Churches including attending monthly meetings, rotation providing worship at the three care homes, recording Wednesday Clergy Comments, and opening prayer for the City Council. Gave the message during the Lenten Lunch service on March 21, 2024, and participated in all the Lenten Lunch Series. Participated in the RCAOC "Praise in the Park" worship service on June 30, 2024. Gave the message at the Community Thanksgiving Service at First Lutheran Church in Dorrance, KS on November 17, 2024. This year I will serve at Vice President of the Association.

I am a member and participant in the Church Council and all of the Council Committees: Executive Committee, Altar Guild, Educations, Worship & Music, Stewardship & Finance, Cemetery, Scholarship, and Technology Committees. I participate in and sing with the Agape Choir, and I participate in the sewing group ministry. Cleaning up and updating the church database is an on-going task. I am continuing to find addresses and contact information that is out of date, missing information like dates of birth, 2018-2021 baptism, confirmation, and first communion dates are also having to be tracked down and entered. A big THANK YOU to Georganna McCrary and Teresa Hilbrink for updating our missing memorial information and

plaques. Because of their efforts we are current, and work is being done by Daron Woelk to engrave the missing plaques and get a new memorial plaque board completed.

Cleaning up 6 years of unattended electronic and written records continues to take up a great deal of attention and time and is a slow process. I want to express my appreciation for the time and effort the Church Council leadership has invested this year in reading over large amounts of information and compiling that information into documents that can be kept current and forwarded to future leadership. They have also engaged in an intensive study and review of the church assets and resources, guided by current best business practices. We are a church, but we also have day-to-day operations and business that needs to be conducted ethically and efficiently. They have reviewed all the Church documents to ensure that they are updated and current. In 2024 there was almost 50% turnover in new leadership on the Church Council and the team is dedicated to ensuring that succinct and accurate information is documented for future leaders.

As you prayerfully consider the updates recommended for the church bylaws and the endowment policy, I encourage you to think about these proposals through scripture. Luke 12:15-34: In the parable of the rich fool, Jesus dispels the false belief that more possessions make us more secure. Using barns as a symbol of abundance, he challenges the need to build bigger storehouses when we already have enough. It's an indictment of hoarding at the expense of generosity. The parable ends with Jesus teaching the crowd 'a rich man turns into a rich fool when he hoards excess wealth at the expense of generosity.' As we plan for the future, we must also leave room for generosity. If we focus on stronger security nets and don't see the needs around us, we're nothing but rich fools. If there's one big takeaway from the parable of the rich fool, it's the warning against stockpiling possessions. But the line between responsible saving and hoarding gets fuzzy fast. So how do we know when we have enough? And how much is too much?

Dear God, we ask for your wisdom and guidance for healthy discernment as we strive to do the work of your kingdom in your church. Give us the courage to fearlessly live into our faith. In Jesus name, Amen

Respectfully Submitted,  
Pastor Teri Sutherlin

## **8. Parish Ministry Associate's Report**

Thanks be To God! A year has come and gone, and it seems the longer I am a member of this Church the more I find I don't know! Blessed be to all of St. John and a Huge thank you for allowing me another year of growth and of service.

Today as I sit writing what many say is an "Annual" report. For me it is a way to remember what we at St. John have been able to accomplish in service to God. In front of me in my office I have a paper with a few verses from Ephesians which is on my bulletin

board. I will not write out the whole page, but it is Ephesians 2:8-10. What struck me was the first verse, which is, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God-“ As I look back at what we as the church have accomplished this year within the community I am so thankful.

Between our church and what we provide in the way of proclaiming God’s Love, Mercy and Grace in and as a part of the community I am at a loss for a way to communicate it. Our weekly services, our Sunday School, Pastor Teri’s bible study, our work with other churches in the community and so many other ways we have help to reach out to others it is surprising. To continue in Ephesians, As I continue to use this in our ability to help others we are reminded again it is the “Gift” of God, not just the result of “Works” and as the scripture continues it is so that no one may boast. Understanding that we are not boasting and at the same time it is a report to you how we have been able to as a wider church through our RCAOC provide community services, provide gas to transients, and a room now and then for people traveling trying to make it back home. Through our community Thrift shop we are able to, with other donations, provide a bit of gas to help them on their way. A few of our community have provided transportation to get them to a place or back home to Russell.

In one aspect as we continue to look at Ephesians it also says and reminds us- “We are what God made us!” We have been created in Christ Jesus for good works. I believe that we as a Community and as St. Johns have in a meager way done a little part of this as, “We were created in Christ Jesus for good works!” and I would say a big Amen to that! This year to me has been this verse all over our community. On a personal note is that you all have been with me on my journey with Deb as well. She has had her last procedure and is working to get back to walking all over (Hopefully!) I have many thanks to give to St. John and the community for the help I have received there as well. To remember this through our year with St. John is very much like the last verse in “Which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life!” You may know as St. John that this last year was truly a walk in the way of Christ for all of us. Thank you all for allowing me to continue as PMA here at St. John and also to thank everyone for truly walking in the path and journey Christ has asked of us to take. We are truly and will always be God’s children. Let us continue always to walk in the light with our sisters and brothers too.

Respectfully - John Dumler

## 9. Youth and Family Report

### A. Education Committee Report

Sunday school, confirmation, and youth activities are the true cornerstone of a child's relationship with their church and the Lord. The Children's education ministry of St. John Lutheran Church is possible only through the tireless volunteerism of our parish.

As in years past, Sunday school classes are held for PreK-5th grade by a rotating schedule of parent volunteer teachers. Kim Stoppel and Gina Langhofer are teaching confirmation classes. New this year, the PreK-2<sup>nd</sup> grade classes have moved to two downstairs classrooms.

The Sunday school teachers have implemented the use of online curriculum, thereby making lesson planning much easier. All communication from the Education Committee to home is now through the Facebook group "St. John Lutheran Church of Russell, KS – Sunday School." This has helped tremendously with our connection to families.

The enrollment and attendance of Sunday School has increased. We regularly have 25+ students in attendance each week. All students share in the saying of the Lord's prayer with Pastor Teri at dismissal time from the Chapel.

New in 2024, the last Sunday of each month has been designated as "Youth Sunday" at the 10:30 worship service. 425 Youth serve as greeters, readers, and ushers. The SS youth participate also during Children's time with a special song or other planned activity.

St. John Lutheran Church confirmed two students on Reformation Sunday, Jasmine Jefferson and Kinzey Zorn.

Per tradition, all youngsters had the opportunity to participate in the Donkey parade on Palm Sunday, the Blessing of the Keys and Backpacks in September, and the Christmas program in December. Special thanks to Kim Stoppel, Juanita Flegler, and Margaret Walter for their musical assistance and expertise during the Christmas program.

VBS was held in partnership with TUMC in August, led by Heather Pohlman, Amber Ruggels, and Kelli Johnson. TUMC was the host site. The program, "Babylon, Courage in Captivity" was provided by St. John's.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any fresh ideas or suggestions you would like to see. Our youth are our future; they grow and prosper from the church's engagement and support.

It's been a busy and enlightening first year to serve as the Education representative on the Church Council. I truly appreciate the church's support in fulfilling this role.

Afton Brown, Education Chair



## B. 425 Youth Group

“Look straight ahead and fix your eyes on what lies before you.” - Proverbs 4:25

425 Youth meetings begin each Wednesday at 6:30 pm with a meal and fellowship followed by a lesson. Meetings typically end by 7:45 pm and include 20 youth from 7th grade through 12th grade. The goal of 425 Youth is to have youth lead decision making while adults (leaders, parents, pastor) are present to facilitate lessons and offer support.

### **Fundraisers**

*-Ash Wednesday Soup Supper*

Raised \$1,122.00

*-Easter breakfast*

Total expenses: \$263.27

Donations: \$643.00

Total Profit: \$400.18

*-Live Nativity*

1,000 people

Donations: \$1,125.00

Youth budget: \$327.00

Expenses: \$88.22 candy canes, \$900.00 camel rental, \$115.00 pizza/drinks/hand warmers

Total Profit: 348.78

Thank you to Crecia Reeves, Tad Krug, Nathan Ryan, Marcia Steckel, Mike Radke, the Hopper family, Scheck Oil, and all of the St. John youth who participated in this memorable tribute to our Savior.

*-Yard clean-up*

Donations: \$300.00

### **Community Outreach**

*- Make Christmas Cards for food pantry basket recipients*

*- Pack Christmas boxes at the food pantry*

*- We took a trip to Manhattan. The group raked leaves at the Lutheran Campus Ministry house, then attended a K-State Women's Basketball Game*

### **Fun/Fellowship**

*- End of the school year putt putt Golf and Freddy's in Hays. The van used for transportation was loaned, at no expense, by the Zorn family.*

*- Trip to Wichita for trampoline park, miniature golf, and go carts. The van used for transportation was loaned, at no expense, by the Zorn family.*

## 10. Evangelism/Social Ministry/Parish Fellowship Committee Report

### A. Back-to-School Giveaway

St. John Lutheran Church held their Back to School Giveaway on August 1-2, 2024. Many volunteers were involved in the planning and set up and all were greatly appreciated. All Russell area students were welcomed, and we were able to give new and gently used clothing and personal hygiene products to 82 children. In addition to the clothing we also gave school supplies to 22 children grades 7-12. Any clothing and some of the hygiene supplies that were left at the end of the Giveaway were donated to several places including: The Russell County Health Department, Russell County Food Pantry, USD 407, ARC, Jana's Closet, Options in Hays, the Salina Men's shelter, and a new mission for children through a church in Wichita.

### B. Heart2Home

Team: Connie Dumler, Teresa Hilbrink, Judy Holmes, Sheryl Krug, Kristine Mader, Brooke Olson and family (Dawn Aalbers, Emily Olson, Maggie Olson, Marshall Olson, Maybelle Olson, Michael Olson, Mitchell Olson, Morgan Olson, Miquala Purscell), Pastor Teri Sutherlin, Sunday School and Confirmation Students, and *all* members of the St. John Lutheran Church Family

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Heart2Home project started “Spiritual Nutrition Deliveries” in March 2020. The project was created to meet a specific need, and continued to grow as Heart2Home volunteers realized the number of individuals in the community that could benefit from weekly contact. There are no income or age restrictions for the Heart2Home project.

Heart2Home recipients include St. John members, as well as community members that have been referred to the project. Every Monday, recipients receive a shelf-stable meal and bread, fruit, vegetables, desserts, and snack items as available. Each recipient also receives current devotional books; notes and gifts from Pastor Teri and the Sunday School and Confirmation students; and the St. John Newsletter.

Although the food and ministry materials may address the nutritional and spiritual needs of participants, Heart2Home volunteers assist in many other ways. Volunteers have served as tech support for televisions and computers; looked up phone numbers and addresses; gathered mail and packages from porches and entryways; shoveled sidewalks and driveways; mowed and trimmed lawns; and most importantly provided a moment or two of conversation and caring. If a Heart2Home recipient cannot be contacted, volunteers call Russell County Dispatch to request a welfare check. Other projects have

been completed by the Heart2Home team – special “thank you” treats for care center and emergency services employees; emergency supplies of infant formula and diapers; transportation arrangements for medical appointments; and more.

The participant list shrinks when recipients are hospitalized or no longer need Heart2Home services; the list grows as referrals are made by St. John and other community members. In March and December, St. John Lutheran volunteers deliver Meals on Wheels to individuals throughout the community, and some of these individuals become Heart2Home recipients.

To make a participant referral to the Heart2Home project, or to volunteer, please contact the church office. Additional delivery drivers are always in demand. Individuals are invited to donate baked goods or provide special treats (shelf-stable snacks, gelatin cups, fresh garden produce, etc.). Monetary donations utilized to purchase serving containers, sturdy sacks, and fresh fruit and vegetables are greatly appreciated.

### C. New Mothers Care Team

The New Mothers Care Team originated in April of 2011. The purpose of this team is to provide new mothers and families of the congregation with meals in their home for two weeks on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. This is a total of six meals with six different team members carrying out this mission. The team’s efforts have been well received. Many recipients have joined the Care Team and the private Facebook group. The number of participants continues to grow as new moms, grandmothers, and others join our team.

Currently, we have 91 members in the Facebook group. If interested, please let me know and I will add you to the Care Team and Facebook group. I may be reached at 785-324-2445 or on Facebook (Susan Marlatt Krug).

Families served in 2024:

<i>February</i>	Cody & Britni Pope, baby Cora Elizabeth
<i>March</i>	Tanner & Taylor Krug, baby Josephine Marie
<i>August</i>	Preston & Madyson Weigel, baby Cruz Joseph
<i>October</i>	Brandon & Laura Ridgley, baby Bristol Sage
<i>December</i>	Justin & Lizzy White, baby Olivia Kristen

A special thank you to all those that provided and delivered meals this year - Taryn Bilbrey, Chloe Boxberger, Marie Boxberger, Ashley Mai, Erin Mai, Melinda Olson, Kristen Rios, Ashley Rohleder, Sadee Soldan, and Kylie Stoppel.

It is always a delight to celebrate a new family member - the rewards are great for this mission. Please keep us informed of any upcoming babies. We would love to serve your family!

#### D. Prayer Shawl Ministry

A special thank you goes to those who knit and crochet the prayer shawls. During 2024, twenty-six prayer shawls were lovingly and prayerfully created by the group members. We welcome anyone who wants to learn to knit or crochet to join us Monday mornings at 10:00 am in the Parish Hall.

Blessings to those who continue to support the Prayer Shawl Ministry at St. John Lutheran Church.

#### E.. Sewing Circle (Crazy Quilting Ladies)

Donations from church members and the community of sheets, fabric, thread, and other notions during the year have made it possible to continue this worthwhile work of “comforters” for those in need. Monetary donations allow us to purchase batting and additional supplies as needed. Throughout the year, many church members “purchased” quilts by making a donation, which also lets us keep up with inflation.

Over the last three years, each roll of batting has “shrunk” in size by five yards, and the shipping has increased to \$30.45 per roll. Inflation also affects the shipping costs to Lutheran World Relief. We have used our donations to pay \$168.00 this year to send 60 quilts to Lutheran World Relief. Thank you’re the your generosity and interest in this ministry.

Pastor Teri has been a true blessing to our group. Many items we receive as donations are not usable for our work. Sewing machines and fabric for sewing were delivered to the KC Metro organization Once We Were Refugees. This non-profit teaches sewing classes so willing refugees learn a trade and receive the machines they learned on upon finishing a nine week class. We also pass on other items to the Thrift Store and to the Hospital Auxiliary to benefit others.

The group was happy to give eight high school graduates a quilt to remind them of their faith.

The circle entered six quilts in the Russell County Free Fair this year. While making the community aware of our work, we received prize money on four.

Over thirty-five quilts were “purchased” by making a donation during the two week blessing of the quilts in October this year. In addition, five quilts were donated to Angels Care Home Health (Russell), and five quilts were donated to Jana’s Closet (Trinity Lutheran Church, Hays).

If you are interested in participating in this ministry, all are welcome. You do not have to sew – tying a knot is all the skill you need! We meet from 1:30 to 4:00 pm on Tuesday afternoons.

Respectfully,  
St. John Sewing Circle

F. St. John Women of the ELCA

***Balance Beginning January 1, 2024..... \$800.00***

INCOME

2024 Thankoffering (collected) .....	777.00
Bank Account Interest.....	14
Birthday Offerings .....	3.00
Donations (memorial money, etc.) .....	1,345.00
Funeral Dinners	1,650.00
Group Circle Offerings.....	236.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME .....</b>	<b>\$4,011.14</b>

EXPENSES

2023 Thankoffering (donated).....	777.00
Donations.....	600.00
Lenten Lunch.....	225.00
Meals.....	92.05
Miscellaneous .....	329.85
Refrigerator for Kitchen .....	1,252.99
Women of the ELCA (1/2 of 2023 offering) .....	<u>118.00</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES .....</b>	<b>\$2,254.56</b>

***Balance Ending December 31, 2024..... \$1,416.25***

G. Wiggle Your Wings Preschool Report

Wiggle Your Wings Preschool continues to serve as a nurturing and faith-centered environment for young learners. We are blessed to provide a single afternoon session from 12:30 to 3:00 PM Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays where our students not only grow academically but also in a safe Faith based environment.

Last year (2023-2024), we had five exceptional students who thrived, of these, four transitioned successfully to kindergarten, while one has re-enrolled for the current year. For the 2024-2025 school year, we were delighted to welcome seven wonderful students who are excelling in their academic journey and strengthening their foundation of faith.

We emphasize both academic readiness and spiritual growth. Each day begins with prayer, we also pray before snack time and incorporate faith-based lessons alongside core academic activities designed for kindergarten readiness. This approach allows us to instill values, build character, and promotes intellectual development.

In October 2024 we were blessed to welcome a new paraeducator into our classroom. She has been invaluable, providing additional support to our classroom and enhancing the overall learning experience. She has been a tremendous blessing to both our students and staff.

As we move forward, we remain committed to providing a well-rounded education that prepares our students for kindergarten and beyond. We will continue to provide a supportive and loving environment for all students who walk through our doors.

In conclusion Wiggle Your Wings Preschool is more than just a classroom; it is a place where faith and learning flourish together. We are grateful for the continued support of our church community and look forward to another year of growth and blessings.

## **11. Property Committee Report**

The following list details the work done on church property this the 2024 calendar year:

### Church:

- Replaced again this year one AC unit for upper and lower classrooms due to an ‘Act of God’ situation. (Shubert Heating & Air-Hays)
- Painted Church Steeple shutters (Carrillo Painting - Hays)
- Upgraded camera system (16 cameras) throughout the church (Weigel Security & Electrical Services - Ellsworth)
- Hardwired and reset the Electrical Sign - Weigel Security & Cory Funk)
- Upgrade on electronic equipment in offices (Cory Funk)
- Replaced 12 glass panes at the parsonage due to the May 19th hail storm
- Replaced roof at the parsonage due to the May 19th hail storm - (Uhl Const.)
- Replaced guttering at the parsonage due to the May 19th hail storm (Uhl Const.)
- Replaced dishwasher at the parsonage due to leaks
- Replaced sanctuary carpet (Carpet One - Hays)
- Secret Garden upgrades and regrading of floor away from buildings (DJ Klema, Richard Wolf, Paul Wharton)

### Continuation projects for 2025 include:

- Replacement of Cemetery Gazebo roof (Cemetery Committee)
- Parsonage garage door replacement

I would like to thank the following Property Committee members for their work this year on these projects and their continued support in keeping our church properties up to date: Cory Funk, Nathan Ryan, Bryan Dinkel, Morris Krug, Rich Sieker, Frank Peirano, DJ Klema and Galen Niedenthal.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gaylon Walter

## 12. Worship & Music Report

The Worship and Music committee members are: Deb Karst, Lois DeWald, Juanita Flegler, Ruth Keil, Margaret Walter, Glenda Phillips, Melinda Olson and Pastor Sutherlin. The committee's goal is to provide assistance to Pastor in making worship at St. John Lutheran and uplifting and meaningful weekly experience.

We were pleased to work with our Christian Education Chair, Afton Brown, to coordinate monthly youth Sundays at the 10:30 service. Musicians willing to play at services continues to be a concern of the committee.

Yours in Christ.

Melinda Olson, Worship and Music Chair

### A. Altar Guild

Co-Directresses: Lois DeWald and Deb Karst

Assistant Directress: Rhonda Kuhlmann

Secretary-Treasurer: Gina Langhofer

The purpose of the Altar Guild is to assist the Pastor and other worship leaders to create a spiritual atmosphere for worship services including baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

The tasks required to achieve these goals were faithfully performed by 21 Altar Guild members with help from additional volunteers. Members on each monthly committee prepare for and assist worship leaders at each communion service in the sanctuary and chapel. A choice of wine or apple juice is available at all communion services. Wafers (both wheat and gluten free) and communion bread baked by Tammy Nuss are available at communion services. Special thanks to Tammy for her bread making skills.

The Altar Guild linens and vestments were graciously cleaned and pressed by Master Cleaners at no cost to the church. Special thanks to Master Cleaners of Hays. Brenda Yoder is greatly appreciated for sharing her skills by making an additional Altar Guild robe.

Roses were purchased by the Altar Guild and placed on the altar in the sanctuary (or chapel) in recognition of baptisms. Thank you to Paula Gibson for cross-stitching the beautiful towels that are used at the baptisms and presented to the person being baptized. Also, thanks to Dick and Georganna McCrary for providing the baptismal candles given to the person being baptized.

Thank you to the veteran and newly trained acolytes for continuing to light the candles at the 10:30 services. Special thanks to Tytin Bay for volunteering to serve as acolyte at the 8:15 services October through December 2024 each Communion Sunday.

The Altar Guild decorated the sanctuary for Palm Sunday and Easter, and both the sanctuary and chapel for Advent and Christmas. Thank you to Tiffanie Mai for creating the Thanksgiving display this year.

We would like to thank the Property Committee for their invaluable assistance setting up (and taking down!) the trees in the sanctuary and chapel for Advent and Christmas season. The Property Committee also deserves special thanks for assisting the Altar Guild as needed during the carpet replacement process. Gaylon Walter went above and beyond, building a banner holder and repairing the paschal candle stand in the chapel. Sincere thanks to Frank Peirano for his gracious (and prompt!) assistance when a request was made by the Altar Guild.

Two additional sets of crismons (ornaments) were created for the trees in the chapel and sanctuary utilizing memorial funds honoring Mary Ulrich. These crismons were added to the current sets or replaced damaged crismons. We hope you had time to take a close up look at these beautiful additions to our Christmas trees sometime during the Advent or Christmas season.

We are grateful for the guidance we received from Pastor Sutherlin and PMA Dumler this year. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Deb Kreutzer, John Kreutzer, Shayla Peck, and Sheryl Krug their assistance and support.



### 13. 2024 Membership Statistics

#### Membership

	Baptized	Confirmed
January 1, 2024 .....	330.....	281

#### Additions in 2024

Confirmations .....	2.....	2
Baptism.....	10.....	0
Transferred In.....	3.....	3

#### Reductions in 2024

Death.....	12.....	12
Removed by request .....	4.....	4
Transferred out.....	10.....	10 * Statistical adjustment

January 1, 2025 .....	319.....	260
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#### Attendance

#### **Average Attendance .....** 2024.....2023

Saturday .....	26.....	25
Early Sunday .....	26.....	26
Late Sunday .....	57.....	55
Weekly .....	123.....	106

#### **Special Service Attendance .....** 2024.....2023

Ash Wednesday.....	106.....	97
Lenten Services ( <i>five</i> services – average).....	28.....	26
Maundy Thursday .....	70.....	68
Good Friday .....	44.....	39
Easter Saturday .....	46.....	50
Easter Sunday ( <i>two</i> services – total).....	218.....	227
Longest Night/Blue Christmas .....	7.....	6
Christmas Eve I.....	298.....	255
Christmas Eve II .....	53.....	64
We Gather As One (5 services – average) .....	92.....	80

## 14. 2024 Philanthropic Fund Recipients

At the December Council Meeting, it was decided to present two local nominations (Russell County Food Pantry and Russell Play Park) and two global nominations (Kans For Kids and The Lutheran Disaster Response – US Hurricane Response) for congregational vote. Based on voting results, one local and one global ministry will each receive 50% of the funds available for distribution totaling \$1,612.51.

Previous Philanthropic Fund recipients:

- 2023.... Wiggle Your Wings Preschool Tuition, Lutheran World Relief
- 2022.... Kansas Food Bank, Lutheran World Relief - Ukraine Crisis
- 2021.... Russell County Relief Fire Fund; Russian Far East Sponsorship
- 2020.... Russell County 4-H Development Fund; Oaks Indian Mission (Oaks, Oklahoma); St. Paul Lutheran Church (Lake Charles, Louisiana)
- 2019.... Big Brothers Big Sisters; Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas, Inc. (DSNWK); Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Missions
- 2018.... Lutheran Disaster Services - California Wildfires; Options, Inc.; Russell County Food Pantry
- 2017.... Camp Tomah Shinga; Russell Community Backpack Fund Endowment; Sister Puerto Rico ELCA Lutheran Churches
- 2016.... Lutheran Churches in Russia; Russell County Food Pantry; Valley Hope
- 2015.... Camp Tomah Shinga; Phased in Project in Wichita Falls, Texas; Santa's Helpers
- 2014.... National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI); St. John Lutheran Scholarship at Lutheran School of Theology (Chicago); Summer Kids Intervention Program (SKIP)
- 2013.... Post Rock Family Services - Breaktime; Russell County Food Pantry; Summer Kids Intervention Program (SKIP)

**15. General Funds – 2024 Balance Sheet and Income and Expense Statement**

**16. Designated Funds – 2024 Balance Sheet and Income and Expense Statement**

**17. Cemetery Funds – 2024 Balance Sheet and Income and Expense Statement**

## **18. Independent Accountants' Report on Applying Agreed-upon Procedures**

**19. St. John Lutheran Church Endowment Policy (Proposed)**

**20. By-Laws of St. John Lutheran Church (DRAFT)**



## **21. Constitution of St. John Lutheran Church**